

Virtual Community of Practice - Transdisciplinary Sustainability Program

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 Graduate Programs at Institutions of Higher Education Serving Hispanic Americans

2011 Abstract

California State University, Fullerton has established a transdisciplinary virtual community of practice (TVCoP) to enhance graduate education for Hispanic Americans in a sustainability-centered Environmental Studies curriculum. Our TVCoP serves as a recruitment and retention tool, a forum for sharing of expertise and as a repository of best practices pertaining to sustainability topics that will be incorporated in the graduate Environmental Studies curriculum, a professional networking resource for our students and community, and a source for research and professional expertise.

As part of this project, the university has established a Center for Sustainability as the logistic and infrastructural home of the TVCoP. The Center has hosted a number of large on-campus events. A forum on Sustainability and Diversity in Graduate Education was held on February 18, 2010. The keynote speaker was Dr. Orlando Taylor, and the event included panels of faculty and leaders from the business and policy communities discussing the role of graduate education in the 21st century. The event also showcased student and faculty research related to sustainability and a job fair. In addition, the Center hosts discussions of pertinent public policy, such as AB32 and SB375 (the "greenhouse gas bills") and Proposition 23, which was aimed at delaying implementation of AB32. The Center for Sustainability participated in an opinion poll of Orange County voters conducted by the Center for Public Policy prior to the November 2010 general election. In April 2011, the Center hosted an Alternative Energy and Transportation Expo and a Local, Organic, and Sustainable Food Expo on the Cal State Fullerton campus. Both events attracted wide attention from on- and off-campus. Several K-12 school groups participated as well as area community colleges. Students and community members were exposed to the principles of sustainability through exhibits about energy and transportation and sustainable food production and a farmer's market. We have reached out to schools and colleges with large Hispanic American student populations as a way to enhance recruitment of underrepresented groups into the area of sustainability and environmental studies.

The Center has been the university's interface in its partnership in the Anaheim Center for New Energy Technologies (AC-NET). Combining the technical and innovative strengths of students from Cal State Fullerton along with Anaheim Public Utilities' real beta testing facilities, AC-NET is focused on supporting the efforts of entrepreneurs, start-ups, and ventures in bringing clean energy and water technologies to market. As part of this partnership, AC-NET sponsored a graduate seminar in the Environmental Studies Program, Energy in Modern Society. The Center has also initiated a new research program on energy with AC-NET.

The Center also houses the Green Campus program from the Alliance to Save Energy. This program provides funding for up to five paid internships per semester and also supports a for-credit internship program aimed at energy efficiency and related outreach.

The Center has established a number of internship programs with area partners including numerous local government agencies and business such as Disney.

Our TVCoP has local, national, and global focus, integrating existing social networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter with resources available through our existing information technology infrastructure such as webinars, discussion forums, blogs, and streaming media. We have established a learning community using the EPSILEN e-portfolio system to increase student learning outcomes. Our assessment program has informed development of a new web-based assessment environment by EPSILEN that will allow us to effectively integrate social networking and assessment of program learning outcomes. The FIPSE grant has additionally supported three to five faculty fellows per semester who are working to develop the TVCoP and related assessment tools. The TVCoP will become a focal point of the curricular, research, and educational opportunities and expansion in the area of sustainability.

Organization Type: Public College or University
 Institution Type: Doctoral
 Special Designation: Hispanic Serving Institution

ONLINE REFERENCES:

Alternative Energy and Transportation Expo <http://sustainability.fullerton.edu/altexpo/>

Energy in Modern Society Seminar http://www.ocmetro.com/t-acnet_csufullerton_grad_course_032610.aspx

Facebook Page <http://www.facebook.com/CSUFSustainability>

Forum on Sustainability and Diversity in Graduate Education <http://sustainability.fullerton.edu/news.asp>

Green Campus Program <http://sustainability.fullerton.edu/greencampus/>

Partnership with the Anaheim Center for New Energy Technologies (AC-NET) <http://www.acnet-anaheim.net/about/about-main.htm>

Research Program on Energy with AC-NET <http://calstate.fullerton.edu/news/2010/151-acnet-csuf-sustainability-research-partnership.html>

Twitter Link http://twitter.com/Sustain_Center

SUBJECTS:

- o o o Access, Retention, and Completion
- o o o Assessment and Evaluation
- o o o Environmental Sciences
- o o o Graduate and Professional Education
- o o STEM

Subject Key:

- o o o Highly relevant

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- ° ° Relevant
- ° Slightly relevant